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Approved For Release 2002/05/07 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000200040002-9

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2 February 1954

THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE SUPPORT FOR THE WAR

I. Viet Minh has psychological hold on majority Vietnamese villagers, both in own territory and in that held by French.

A. This vital to Viet Minh in terms manpower, troop movements, security, supply and intelligence. For instance, Viet Minh consistently knows in advance of French offensive moves, and takes steps to minimize their effect.

B. Picture clearly shown by situation Tonkin delta where normally 150,000 French troops.

1. First 9 months 1953 number enemy-held villages increased 9% for total of 2,245; French held only 1,361.

II. Reasons for Viet Minh success.

A. During Jap occupation in World War II and immediately after, Ho built a national administration down to village level.

B. This native authority has much more appeal than French-sponsored rule of Bao Dai and company; hatred of French runs deep.

C. In addition skillful use standard propaganda media, Communists have crafty word-of-mouth campaign; French have failed miserably in psycho war field.

D. Bad behavior French troops toward villagers and

cruel reprisals on whole villages contrasts generally "correct" conduct Viet Minh.

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25X1

3 01990
DOCUMENT NO. 3
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
DEC. 1953
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
AUTH: KR-702
DATE: 1-14-80 REVIEWER: []

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III Noncooperation of intellectual group.

- A. Many intellectuals, called "fence sitters", refuse to serve Bao Dai or even commit themselves openly to support his regime; many others with the best brains are on Viet Minh side.
- B. Reasons for noncooperation are:
 - 1. Hedging against eventual Viet Minh control -- French foster this by talk of negotiations.
 - 2. Pique over non-appointment to highest jobs.
 - 3. Sincere opinion Bao Dai is a French puppet.
- C. Only answer this problem is to stage a political revolution in Vietnam to undermine attraction of Ho's revolution.
 - 1. Bao Dai's appointees been mostly Viets of Fr. citizenship or have no grass roots support.
 - 2. Viet government must be purged of all taint of French influence.
 - 3. By elections or appointments, group with village-level support must be brought into gov't.
 - 4. New regime must have all-out propaganda to reach and convince Viets at all levels.

IV Creation of effective Vietnamese army depends on political progress.

- A. General Navarre depending on big, efficient Viet army to destroy Viet Minh.

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- B. But although this army rapidly growing in size (now 152,000), most observers say it won't fight.
1. Army has no political base for good morale.
 2. Little or no effort made in morale training, anyway.
 3. Poor morale shown by large number those "missing" in battle; believed most of these are deserters.
- C. Another big problem is training of officers.
1. French don't trust Viets as leaders and therefore don't push training.
 2. Result is grave lack of Viet field grade and staff officers; French supply these but this resented by Viet junior officers and troops.
 3. U.S. officials repeatedly offered suggestions to improve officer training but French refuse listen; French say U.S. methods not suited to Viets.
 4. Training of Viet officers must be given priority if war to be won.

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